

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 691

By Evans

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize the members and the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church upon the occasion of the church's 135th anniversary.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly take great pride in recognizing those venerable religious institutions and their congregations who, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, the good people of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Greenbrier comprise one such estimable congregation, who will this year celebrate their church's 135th anniversary; and

WHEREAS, organized in 1874 on what is now Main Street, also known as Old Distillery Road, in Greenbrier, Ebenezer Baptist Church met during the early years in a log schoolhouse near the Rocky Fork Spring; and

WHEREAS, initially known as Rocky Fork Baptist Church, the church changed its name to Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church when the congregation relocated to the present site in 1876; the name was later shortened to Ebenezer Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, by the year 1880, the membership of Ebenezer Baptist totaled 101 people, with sixty members enrolled in Sunday school, which was held only in the spring and summer; the church held preaching services on the fourth Sunday of the month and on each preceding Saturday; and

WHEREAS, in 1885, members of Ebenezer Baptist Church helped found the Greenbrier Baptist Church; in October of 1915, the church voted to become a part of the Robertson County Baptist Association, becoming one of the eighteen original churches in the new association; and

WHEREAS, on September 16, 1928, the church voted to have electric lights installed in the building; a committee was elected to compose plans for the project, but the idea did not become a reality until 1941; and

WHEREAS, by 1935, sixty-one years after Ebenezer Baptist was founded, a second monthly preaching day was added, when the church began holding preaching days on the second and fourth Sundays of the month; and

WHEREAS, in 1941, the Baptist Young People's Union received permission to work on the church, providing that the funds were available; through their labors, four Sunday school rooms were completed and the front of the sanctuary, including the choir loft and the pulpit, was rearranged; and

WHEREAS, on September 29, 1946, the congregation voted to hold weekly preaching days; to accommodate this increase in meetings, the basement of the educational building was built at the back of the main sanctuary, providing five additional Sunday school rooms; and

WHEREAS, the plans for this addition were designed to leave room for an additional story to be added above this unit and attached to the building; in 1959, the second phase of this plan was approved, and the second floor of the educational building, which is still part of the building today, was completed in 1960; and

WHEREAS, because the church building initially had no water supply, all water had to be carried from a nearby well, with permission from the owner, until June of 1956, when the church hired someone to dig a well at the back of the church property; and

WHEREAS, on August 9, 1961, the leading deacons of Ebenezer Baptist recommended that a planning committee be elected to oversee the building of a new church sanctuary; the deacons' desire for a new sanctuary and a building fund was so fervent that each pledged \$1,000 of his own money to begin the fund; and

WHEREAS, though none of these men had \$1,000 at the time of his generous pledge, each fulfilled his promise by contributing money in small increments over a period of time; in 1963, the trustees were given the authority to borrow whatever funds were necessary for the completion of the sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, the final contract, which carried a price tag of \$47,500, included building and finishing the basement; building, finishing, and supplying furniture for the new main sanctuary; a baptistery; heating and air conditioning; and lighting and plumbing; and

WHEREAS, the new space, which is the present sanctuary, replaced the previous sanctuary and connected to the educational building; inaugural services were held in this building on September 22, 1963, and the dedication service for the completed building took place on December 20, 1964; and

WHEREAS, opening the dedication service, Brother William G. Hall offered these uplifting words: "We have come together for the purpose of dedicating the new church building to the Eternal God, our Father and Maker of heaven and earth, the Author and Giver of life, who in the person of Christ Jesus made known to us the power of His Spirit and ever seeks to give life and light to us. Every area of the edifice is to be dedicated to the service and the worship of Almighty God. We dedicate this building, we also dedicate ourselves to our Heavenly Father"; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, a committee began drafting the first constitution and by-laws for the church; this task was completed over a multi-year period, and the constitution and by-laws were finally adopted on May 10, 1972; and

WHEREAS, a growing congregational interest in missions led the women of Ebenezer Baptist to organize the first Women's Missionary Union in 1939; eleven years later, in 1950, the Brotherhood organization was established; and

WHEREAS, an Ebenezer Baptist Church tradition was established in 1967, with the first homecoming celebration; because of the overwhelming success and popularity of this event, the date for homecoming was set for the first Sunday of August each year, and the tradition continues to this day; and

WHEREAS, in the fall of 1969, before the Tennessee public school system offered kindergarten classes, Ebenezer Baptist opened a kindergarten that had the capacity to serve twenty-five students; the fee was only \$5 a week, with a \$5 registration fee per semester; and

WHEREAS, the deacons purchased the first church bus in 1969; an old school bus that had been painted blue, the bus, fondly referred to as the “blue goose,” ran Sunday mornings and evenings to pick up about thirty children and youth to attend services; and

WHEREAS, in January of 1984, the senior citizens of Ebenezer Baptist, admittedly elderly yet still spry and young at heart, organized themselves into a group that they named the “keenagers,” a moniker still used as the name of the group today; and

WHEREAS, for almost a century and a half, the congregation of Ebenezer Baptist Church has made prominent contributions to the civic, educational, and social fabric of Greenbrier and Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, this church could not have become such an integral and historical part of Greenbrier had it not been for the dedicated leadership of a great many pastors who have faithfully guided the church through the many years of its existence; and

WHEREAS, W.B. Trenary began his astute and commendable service as the church’s first pastor in 1880; he was followed by G.W. Trenary in 1883; W.S. Adams in 1886; Sylvanus Dorris in 1892; Chas. Hester in 1896; Geo. R. Milligan in 1901; F.P. Dodson in 1903; W.F. Shannon in 1904; Dixon Payne in 1909; Geo. R. Milligan in 1911; W.M. Bragg in 1914; Sylvanus Dorris in 1917; T.H. Roark in 1920; E.H. Greenwell in 1923; E.W. Stone in 1925; Curtis Fehrman in 1927; V.A. Turner in 1928; T.C. Singleton in 1932; W.M. Miles in 1935; W.W. Harbison in 1936; R.C. Woodard in 1941; C.H. Mustoe in 1947; J.C. Carter in 1948; Earl Hooper in 1949; Doyle Petty in 1957; Hayden Center in 1960; C.E. Tutor in 1962; Wm. G. Hall in 1964; Louis Kennison in 1967; Ernest Mosley in 1974; Dan Farmer in 1975; Terry Peck in 1982; John Lewis in 1983; J.W. Abney in 1985; Jim Hightower in 1990; and Hardy G. “Jack” Evans in 1991; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Jack Evans is the current and longest serving pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church; Pastor Evans has demonstrated tremendous leadership and compassion as he has shepherded his congregation through both the joys and the challenges of life; and

WHEREAS, sensing a need for additional building space and answering a greater calling to serve the community above all else, Pastor Evans has overseen the planning of a new

building; this process, which spanned several years, led to a “Growth Through Giving” program, which was set in place to help raise funds; and

WHEREAS, construction began on the nearly 12,000-square-foot addition in 2008, with more than \$500,000 in savings and commitments; the addition, which has a projected total cost of \$1.6 million, will include a fellowship hall, nurseries, and additional Sunday school classrooms; and

WHEREAS, the members of Ebenezer Baptist Church feel strongly that this new building will advance the church’s work and extend new opportunities to help grow the body of Christ and to reach out and minister to the community; the congregation will dedicate the new building in 2009; and

WHEREAS, Ebenezer Baptist Church is a church family with a rich history of commitment and continuity among its members; many of the present-day members can trace their heritage back for generations, some tracing their roots directly back to the charter members listed in the church’s records; and

WHEREAS, many individuals and families alike have been actively involved in serving the Lord and supporting church programs and activities at Ebenezer Baptist Church for twenty-five years or more; the faith and solidarity of these people has served to preserve this revered place of worship; and

WHEREAS, Ebenezer Baptist Church is among those institutions upon which a just and orderly society is based; it is a focal point for our citizens to worship their Creator as a community of faith and from which they reach out to the secular community as a response to God's saving grace; and

WHEREAS, Ebenezer Baptist Church is truly one of the great religious institutions and catalysts for positive spiritual change in our State and nation, and the members of this exceptional congregation should be appropriately honored for their exemplary service to their fellow Christians and to the good people of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby join in celebrating the 135th anniversary of Ebenezer Baptist

Church, thank the good people of this historic congregation for their notable service to their Lord and the State of Tennessee, and wish them much continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.